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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAO](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (01/28): MITCHELL AND THE
SETTLEMENT IMPASSE

Main Stories:

Al Quds leads with reports on the killing by Israeli military of a farmer in Gaza, following an explosion on the Israeli side of the Kissufim crossing that killed one Israeli soldier and wounded three others. Commenting on the incident, Al-Ayyam's front page notes that the "fragile" Gaza truce has been dealt another blow. Meanwhile, Al-Quds leads with, and other papers front-page, January 27 remarks by Palestinian Authority President Abbas, in which he questions both Hamas' interest in Palestinian national dialogue and Israel's interest in peace. Abbas is quoted criticizing Palestinian opposition groups abroad and vowing to pursue prosecuting Israel for war crimes committed in Gaza.

Al Ayyam's front-page cites AFP in reporting that Special Envoy George Mitchell arrived in Cairo on January 27 as part of his regional tour that will include visits to Egypt, Israel, the Palestinian Territories and possibly Turkey. The paper further notes that Mitchell arrived in the region with a mandate from President Obama to conduct "active and fruitful" diplomacy in seeking regional peace.

All dailies run lengthy quotes from President Obama's January 26 interview with Al-Arabiya in front and inside page coverage. Leading with the story, Al-Ayyam highlights an Obama quote urging Palestinians and Israel to resume peace negotiations. All papers highlight the President's, "commitment to his election promises" regarding the Middle East, noting that Special Envoy George Mitchell is traveling to the region as a sign of the Administration's keen interest in Middle East issues. Papers also highlight Obama's statement to Muslims that, "Americans are not your enemy," and highlight that Obama's remarks stressed the need to "accurately define terrorism and differentiate between terrorism and Islam."

Al Ayyam's front page cites Reuters in quoting Secretary Clinton stating during a press conference on January 27 that Israel has the right to defend itself against Palestinian rocket attacks, "which are getting closer and closer to populated areas." The paper comments that Clinton's remarks could be interpreted by some parties as, "giving Israel a green light," to attack Gaza.

In other front page Gaza news, Al-Ayyam reports that Hamas and Islamic Jihad have set pre-conditions for national unity talks with Fatah, including the conclusion of a truce agreement with Israel and the reopening of Gaza crossings. Meanwhile, Al-Quds and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida front page reports on Hamas failing to deliver on its promise to "fully compensate war victims" in Gaza by distribution cash payments much smaller than originally promised. In a separate story, Al-Quds cites Reuters when quoting Egyptian Foreign Minister Al Ghayt warning Europe not to send navy ships to patrol the Gazan shore because, "this could severely harm relations with Arab countries."-----

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Al Quds publishes a letter by the Palestinian People's Party Secretary General Bassam Salhi, titled, "An open letter to Mr. George Mitchell for a real peace..."(01/28): "Respected Mr. George Mitchell, should you support a Palestinian rescue government that would be a government of national unity, headed by President Abu Mazin and would include all factions, even the Hamas movement; and should that government commit to a ceasefire in Gaza and the West Bank under conditions acceptable to the Palestinians thereby paving

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the way for a different, serious political process... maybe you will be able to... make real progress towards peace, a peace that is based on international norms and standards, not the peace that Israel continually seeks to make..."

3) Hani Habib opines in Al Ayyam under the title, "Mitchell and the settlement impasse"(01/28): "The Israelis are worried about Mitchell's role because of his view that Israeli settlements are the impasse, blocking a solution, and because he might again express this view in a way that will embarrass Israel. However, the major [Israeli] concern is... [that Obama] will impose a settlement [on Israel] after friendly and diplomatic mediation efforts fail".

WALLES